United Nations A/C.3/66/SR.38

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
10 February 2012

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 38th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 November 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Haniff ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.25: Rights of the child

1. **Mr. Herczyński** (Poland), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, said that Albania, Armenia, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste and Ukraine had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. The text highlighted the importance of the first two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the tenth anniversary of their entry into force and drew attention to the adoption of the new, third Optional Protocol providing a communications procedure. It maintained the familiar omnibus format, with special emphasis on the priority theme of the rights of children with disabilities.

Agenda item 68: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.3/66/L.30: Universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination

2. **Mr. Butt** (Pakistan), noting that Rwanda, South Africa and Swaziland had joined the sponsors, introduced the draft resolution.

3. **Ms. Rangel** (Timor-Leste) said that Timor-Leste should not have been listed as a sponsor.

Agenda item 62: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (A/66/12, Supp. No. 12, A/66/12/Add.1 and A/66/321)

4. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, after nearly three decades of work on behalf of Afghan refugees, the deadly 31 October attack on the Kandahar office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had come as a cruel blow, especially in the sixtieth anniversary year of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Since its adoption in 1951, refugees as defined under the Convention and similar instruments had been joined by environmental and economic refugees. While neither a new convention nor a new UNHCR mandate was required, it was necessary to find innovative ways to address the protection gaps.

5. It had been an extremely challenging year, marked by three successive crises: the post-electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire, which had displaced tens of thousands of people internally and almost 200,000 into neighbouring countries; the crisis in Libya, which had created some 1.5 million refugees; and decades-old conflict compounded by drought and famine in Somalia, which had caused a new exodus of Somalis, swelling the total number of Somali refugees to a staggering 940,000 and the Dadaab camp in Kenya to more than five times its intended size.

6. In 2011, new turmoil and old crises like Sudan had brought the number of displaced persons to the highest level in 15 years. Given the ongoing nature of many conflicts, voluntary repatriation was at a 20-year low, and resettlement needs surpassed the annual capacity of receiving States by a ratio of 10 to 1. Local integration could offer a durable solution, and UNHCR continued to facilitate it in, inter alia, West Africa, Tanzania, Eastern Europe and Latin America, increasingly through refugee self-reliance programmes such as the Transitional Solutions Initiative for the Eritrean refugees in eastern Sudan.

7. Ultimately, durable humanitarian outcomes depended on political and socio-economic solutions. While its mandate was non-political, UNHCR could sometimes act as a catalyst for political initiatives, as it had in the case of the strategy for internally displaced persons (IDPs) adopted by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. For successful repatriation outcomes, joint strategies were needed to bring development programmes to refugee areas of origin. Local integration, on the other hand, required support for the host communities, as well as programmes to foster refugee self-reliance. In that connection, education and vocational training were crucial, and UNHCR intended to make education a centrepiece of its operations through a new education strategy integrating the results of a recently completed external evaluation.

8. Innovative responses were creating new opportunities for Afghan refugees, who represented the world's largest protracted refugee population. In Afghanistan, there would be a more targeted reintegration programme, run jointly by UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In Pakistan, the Government was combining assistance for host communities with alternative interim stay arrangements, and in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Government made work permits available to registered Afghan refugees and, with the support of UNHCR, provided health insurance coverage to 200,000 people. UNHCR and the Governments of the three countries would be presenting a multi-year strategy for Afghan refugees at a stakeholders conference in early 2012.

9. Developing countries accommodated 8 out of every 10 refugees, making development assistance critical to local integration. Developed countries should share the refugee burden not only by providing funding but also by instituting constructive resettlement, mobility and managed migration policies.

10. In 2010 UNHCR had provided protection and assistance to some 14.7 million IDPs in 29 countries, of whom around 2.9 million had been able to return home, principally to Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Sri Lanka. It was fully engaged in the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to reform the inter-agency cluster approach to internally displaced populations.

11. UNHCR was carrying out internal structural reforms in alignment with the cluster reform process. It had reduced Headquarters costs from 14 per cent to 9 per cent of overall expenditure, and staff costs from 41 per cent to 27 per cent. It would be moving 49 information and communications technology positions from Geneva to a newly established service centre in Amman, as well as to Budapest and Panama City, and it was working on policies to reduce the number of staff between assignments. All in all, over the previous five years, its volume of activity had nearly doubled, while staff numbers had increased only marginally.

12. Recent operational priorities had focused on strengthening protection and emergency response capacities, and 2011 had put the Office's emergency response capacity to the test. In the first nine months, UNHCR had deployed two and a half times as many emergency personnel as usual and at one point had had more people deployed at the same time than in all of 2010. It had airlifted more than triple the 2010 volume of shelter and other relief items. With its new system of seven supply hubs in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, it was able to respond within 72 hours to simultaneous emergencies involving up to 600,000 people. In addition to broadening its emergency roster to include all Headquarters departments and field operations, it had created a roster of senior-level employees on standby deployment, of whom six had already been deployed.

13. However, UNHCR recognized the need for further improvement. It was developing a new staffing model to allow quicker deployments at the outset of a crisis and a more structured transition to the post-emergency phase. It was reinforcing coordination and support capacities to make inter-agency engagement in refugee outflows more predictable and accountable. As part of its investment in information management, it had set up operational data portals in Ethiopia and Kenya to provide updated registration statistics, maps and sectoral reports on Somali refugees.

14. However, in order to address gaps left during the reform process, UNHCR needed to upgrade its oversight mechanisms to a level commensurate with its significantly larger budget, strengthen its accountability system, improve financial management and control and introduce a new risk management framework, all without creating a large administrative apparatus. It was imperative to stay lean and agile in order to sustain unprecedented donor support. As a result of continuing efforts to reach out to an ever-broader donor base, private-sector contributions had almost quadrupled since 2005, and income from pooled funds and other multilateral sources had grown for the fifth consecutive year. Unrestricted funding remained vital to ensure comparable levels of assistance across all operations, including those out of the spotlight. UNHCR had also increased its reliance on partnerships, with nearly 38 per cent of its budget implemented by partners, for the most part national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Increasingly, partnership with NGOs, as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, extended to policy development, joint planning and action on the ground. Within the United Nations system, UNHCR was working with both the Word Food Programme and the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to strengthen collaboration in refugee emergencies.

15. In December 2011, the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversary celebrations of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees would culminate in an intergovernmental meeting at the ministerial level in Geneva. UNHCR had worked hard in 2011 to make statelessness more prominent on the international agenda, and he was optimistic that many States would announce steps to address that often overlooked problem at the ministerial meeting.

16. All of the countries bordering the 2011 crisis zones deserved the gratitude and solidarity of the international community for their enormous generosity and their respect for the values of international protection. Racism and xenophobia often posed a real threat to the lives and well-being of refugees. Governments needed to convey the message that human rights were for everyone, including the forcibly displaced.

17. In closing, he returned to the situation in the Horn of Africa, where the international community, through its slow reaction and incapacity, had allowed a foreseeable humanitarian crisis to grow to unimaginable proportions. In a dangerous new era of intractable conflict compounded by population growth, urbanization, climate change, and food, water and energy insecurity, the world lacked governance capacity. He appealed to the international community to recognize its shared responsibility and exercise its shared commitment.

18. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) expressed his condolences to the families of the victims of the attack in Kandahar, as well as his delegation's gratitude to UNHCR for its special attention over thirty years to the protection of Afghan refugees.

19. **Mr. Lallemand Zeller** (Observer for the European Union) asked what concrete measures could be adopted to increase voluntary departures, speed local integration and create a development-friendly environment in the Transitional Solutions Initiative areas. He would also be interested in the High Commissioner's views on the role of his Office in promoting leadership and responsibility in a complex humanitarian response.

20. **Mr. Starčević** (Serbia) wondered what impact budget cuts for some UNHCR operations might have on its ability to achieve durable solutions in countries with protracted displacement situations. In his view, people who had been prevented too long from returning to their areas of origin were often left with no real choice but local integration, even if offered the possibility of voluntary return.

21. **Mr. Kimani** (Kenya) said that the more than half a million refugees living in camps in Kenya represented only about a third of Kenya's total refugee population. Kenya was shouldering a far larger burden that it could or should bear. A structured way must be found to engage with the Government regarding the concerns of host communities, as well as environmental degradation and insecurity. It was imperative to stabilize Somalia and rid it of criminal elements. However, in the absence of peace, priority should be given to third-party resettlement and settling refugees in safe havens in Somalia. He would like to know if UNHCR had a strategy for galvanizing international support to resolve the protracted problems in the Horn of Africa.

22. **Mr. Yahiaoui** (Algeria) said that his country had also opened its borders to Libyan refugees, although in fewer numbers, and had been cooperating with UNHCR to provide the necessary assistance. He wondered if annual programmes would receive smaller budgets as a result of the UNHCR budget cuts, or if other extraordinary sources of funding might be available. He also asked if UNHCR envisaged specific responses to protracted refugee situations such as the one in Tindouf, which represented a heavy financial burden.

23. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) said that her country was proud of its long history of support for UNHCR, to which it had contributed nearly $700 million in 2011. She encouraged UNHCR to nurture long-standing partnerships while developing new ones and to strengthen its organizational capacity to deliver strong performance in emergency situations by refining its human resource strategy, on which her delegation would appreciate further details. UNHCR should continue to improve its ability to measure the impact of its activities using quality and outcome performance indicators, and she urged it to report regularly on progress towards achieving its Global Strategic Priorities. It should also establish a structured, organization-wide approach to risk

management, as recommended by the Board of Auditors in its most recent report. She challenged Committee members to do their part in preparing pledges for the ministerial-level meeting to commemorate the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of the statelessness and refugee conventions.

24. **Ms. Bouhamidi** (Morocco) wished to know if UNHCR envisaged any new strategies for the voluntary repatriation of refugees living in protracted situations.

25. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked all who had expressed condolences to UNHCR and to the families of the victims and offered his own very sincere condolences to the Afghan delegation. He would visit the Kandahar office soon in order to convey his condolences to the families personally, as well as his solidarity with colleagues engaged in an important operation. He noted that the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iraq were developing a joint strategy for Afghan refugees in the sub-region, which he hoped the international community would support fully when it was presented at an international stakeholders conference in early 2012.

26. Responding to the European Union representative's questions with respect to voluntary repatriation, local integration and fostering development, he said that durable solutions required a combination of political initiative, humanitarian support and development cooperation. Where there was political will, there was often a solution, but it was not easy to bring the various political actors together. It also remained difficult to link humanitarian actions with development cooperation. From his own experiences in Government, he knew that the two areas were sometimes the purview of different ministries or very separate ministerial departments and therefore hard to coordinate. At the international level, a culture gap still separated the United Nations system and the international financial institutions, despite improved cooperation mechanisms. In addition, UNDP was a relatively small player in development cooperation and could not be the sole partner in integrated transition solutions to humanitarian crises. It was necessary to make the global development apparatus a part the solution from the outset through more effective cooperation with international financial institutions and development agencies, as well as bilateral coordination between them.

27. With respect to questions about partnership and cooperation, UNHCR was improving coordination with civil society actors, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and United Nations agencies such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF. The problem was essentially one of leadership in major emergencies, which it was the responsibility of UNHCR to provide. With that in mind, his Office had made a number of proposals to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for mechanisms to facilitate the emergency deployment of senior UNHCR officials, who could provide a level of management not present in country teams responsible for day-to-day operations.

28. Addressing the Serbian representative's concerns, he said that he would be in Belgrade the following week for the stakeholders conference, which he hoped would provide meaningful support for the quadripartite initiative, as it was much bigger than the UNHCR budget. Although the initial spending authorizations for Balkan operations might seem low, they did not represent budget cuts and would be supplemented as more funds became available. While it was true that European programmes had suffered slightly in 2010 as a result of the dramatic situation in the Horn of Africa, UNHCR remained committed to voluntary repatriation as the preferred solution.

29. Kenya was a highly appreciated and extremely important partner of UNHCR whose Government and people had shown impeccable solidarity with an enormous number of Somali refugees over the decades. The international community needed to take the crisis in the Horn of Africa much more seriously. It must take a functional approach to the situation inside Somalia in order to stem the refugee flow. Noting that the number of Somalis in Kenya far exceeded the population of the refugee camps, he strongly urged the international community to assume a more equitable share of Kenya's burden through increased refugee resettlement and support for the host communities. He stressed the need within Kenya to preserve asylum space, despite the difficulty of handling so many refugees. Unfortunately, UNHCR could not create artificial safe havens in areas where security had to be enforced. It was working very closely with the Government of Kenya to find ways to decongest Dadaab and would improve the security packages.

30. In answer to the questions of the representatives of Algeria and Morocco, he said that voluntary repatriation remained the preferred solution for refugees in protracted situations and that the international community had a shared responsibility for creating the conditions under which it could take place. As those conditions did not obtain in the case of the Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf, living conditions should be improved there. UNHCR intended to use resources gained by reducing structural costs and expanding donor contributions to provide additional assistance in such circumstances.

31. Responding to the representative of the United States, he said that the 2011 programme to enhance protection capacity had resulted in the creation of new country posts, a full review of UNHCR training programmes for protection officers and other staff and an ever-increasing emphasis on partnerships. In keeping with age, gender and diversity mainstreaming, the 2012 programme would focus on preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence. UNHCR had improved its emergency response capacity and was working to improve its deployment mechanisms. It was also strengthening both its available managerial pool and its capacity to manage inter-agency cooperation, the two most important gaps in its emergency response capability.

32. UNHCR would be working to improve its accountability and financial control mechanisms, as well as to establish a more comprehensive management approach, in accordance with the Board of Auditors' recommendation. However, it intended to stay structurally lean and would use existing staff to the maximum extent possible.

33. **Mr. Sefue** (Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that Africa had repeatedly demonstrated political will and leadership with respect to refugees and internally displaced persons. The vast majority of African States were parties to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as to the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa, and the ongoing process of signing and ratifying the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa reaffirmed the member States' ownership of the problem. However, in view of their meagre resources and the immense challenges, such as guaranteeing physical security for humanitarian agencies in Somalia, he appealed for a more robust international response under the leadership of the United Nations Security Council to augment Africa's own efforts, particularly with regard to Somalia.

34. While the African countries had shown great political commitment and hospitality, the many refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa represented a heavy economic, social and cultural burden. As countries with limited resources, African Group members endorsed the concept of burden sharing and urged action on the results of the African Centre for Migration and Society study on quantifying host country costs. Recalling that the developing countries had also been affected by the economic downturn, he called on the international community to put the principles of international cooperation, solidarity and responsibility sharing into action by assisting refugee host communities, resettling more Africans and, more broadly, supporting the work of States and development actors to promote sustainable and equitable growth.

35. It was necessary to move beyond refugee camps to voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Ultimately, what was needed was for the countries of the world to work together to resolve the root causes of refugee problems around the globe.

36. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the number of refugees in the SADC region had declined steadily owing to an overall stabilization of the political environment and increasing regional solidarity and burden sharing. SADC member States nevertheless took migration and asylum issues seriously. Regional and international organizations should address the rights of refugees and migrants and their obligations to them by developing policies to limit irregular movements in accordance with the governing instruments and regional initiatives. Stressing the heavy burden borne by refugee host countries and the substantial requirements of UNHCR programmes, he urged the international community to continue to provide the necessary financial resources.

37. Speaking as the representative of Angola, he said that from 2002 to 2006, 4 million people displaced by the war in Angola had been resettled. Between 2003 to 2006, Angola had repatriated almost 820,000 refugees through its organized voluntary repatriation programme, and in May 2010 it had launched a new

programme to repatriate refugees still living in neighbouring countries such as Botswana. Angola itself had provided protection and assistance to more than 14,000 refugees.

38. **Mr. Lallemand Zeller** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Iceland and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Croatia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, welcomed the successful and continuing efforts of UNHCR to strengthen its emergency preparedness. It should continue to seek strategic solutions and international support for unlocking protracted refugee situations, working closely with the parties to the conflict. Those parties, primarily Governments, had a responsibility not only to aid the uprooted populations but also to work towards a durable solution, as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia had done in their commendable initiative to close the refugee chapter in the Western Balkans.

39. The European Union welcomed the mainstreaming of gender, age and diversity issues, the strategic plan on HIV and the emphasis on access to health services and education. Noting the efforts by the Office to identify persons with disabilities, he urged it to include its activities in that area in the 2012 report. The European Union called on UNHCR to continue to work closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF to respond to the needs of children in mixed migration movements and would welcome further details on its efforts to develop a common framework for international cooperation and burden sharing, particularly with regard to migration. It encouraged UNHCR to continue to work closely with United Nations agencies, NGOs, IOM, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and others to enhance the overall effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

40. While commending UNHCR for developing the Global Needs Assessment and the results-based management framework, the European Union agreed that the system should be refined to provide an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism. It also encouraged UNHCR to continue to broaden its donor base. It welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to strengthen the implementation of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1961 Statelessness Convention, and to secure more accessions. The European Union hoped that the intergovernmental event to commemorate those conventions in December would boost the international community's commitment to achieving durable solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and returnees.

41. **Mr. Frick** (Liechtenstein) said that on the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of the refugee and statelessness conventions, they remained as relevant and indispensable as ever. Liechtenstein was particularly disturbed by the plight of the world's estimated 12 million stateless persons, whose numbers were likely to rise in the face of global warming and other new threats. It was also deeply concerned by the approximately 27.5 million internally displaced persons and urged all parties to conflicts to live up to their obligations under international law and facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNHCR by providing the necessary humanitarian space.

42. Sexual and gender-based violence remained one of the most serious threats to displaced persons. It would serve the interests of refugees, IDPs and, more generally, development to institute programmes aimed at ending violence against women, reducing the exposure of women and girls to such violence and ensuring that women could obtain legal advice and representation.

43. **Mr. Srivali** (Thailand), noting the rise of mixed migration, said that in his country's experience, human traffickers passed migrants off as refugees and asylum-seekers to avoid being detained themselves for criminal activity. That alarming tactic underscored the need to prevent criminals from taking advantage of the protection system and the necessity of the UNHCR 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, which promoted labour migration schemes and regional and global consultative processes, enhanced international cooperation and burden sharing and sought opportunities to coordinate and cooperate with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Thailand appreciated the efforts of UNHCR to operationalize the Bali Process regional framework for controlling illegal migration and looked forward to its practical impact.

44. His Government was continuing to work closely with UNHCR to close protection gaps and find durable

solutions for the 140,000 displaced and other persons of concern residing in Thailand. Among recent achievements, it had improved access to temporary shelter and had collaborated with UNHCR to register more than 1,500 children born to displaced parents. As valuable human resources and individuals with their own dignity, displaced persons should have access not only to basic services but also to vocational training and education, which would also help them to prepare for resettlement or voluntary return.

45. Thailand's temporary shelters represented one of the world's most protracted refugee situations, and his delegation noted that developing countries still hosted 80 per cent of the global refugee population. Thailand would continue to tackle the root causes of displacement and, on the basis of shared responsibility, to work to overcome its challenges.

46. **Mr. Zhang** Guixuan (China) said that Member States could minimize one cause of displacement by promoting more democratic international relations and adherence to the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes. To minimize the social and economic causes, the developed countries should make comprehensive efforts to help the developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals and enhance their capacity for refugee protection and assistance, in accordance with the principle of international solidarity and burden sharing. The international community needed to improve cooperation and enhance the emergency response capacity of the global refugee protection system, as well as prevent its abuse, and individual countries should assist refugees by discouraging all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia, protecting their rights and continuing to improve their living conditions.

47. **Ms. Kondolo** (Zambia) said that the growing number of internally displaced persons and protracted refugee situations reinforced the need for innovative and comprehensive international efforts. It was disheartening that Africa's internally displaced represented 40 per cent of the world IDP population. The recently adopted 2009 African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa provided the legal framework for durable solutions for victims of forced displacement, and she urged member States to expedite its ratification so that it could enter into force.

48. With relative peace prevailing in the region, Zambia had been working closely with UNHCR and Governments to enable thousands of refugees to return to their respective countries of origin in an organized manner, whether with assistance or spontaneously. Unfortunately, owing to inadequate resources, the highly anticipated return of 7,000 Angolan refugees had not materialized. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo appeared hopeful. In the case of Rwanda, while Zambia continued to promote voluntary repatriation, it had established exemption procedures for those in need of protection.

49. Despite progress, the Government was faced with the problem of refugees who had opted to remain in Zambia, and it would need to devise strategies to address it, including the use of immigration laws and the issuance of national passports. It would continue to engage with the countries of origin regarding some of the proposed measures and would also look at other durable solutions such as resettlement.

50. **Ms. Burgess** (Canada) said that stronger cooperation and rapid, concerted action were needed to grapple with displacement challenges such as the exploitation of vulnerable migrants and asylum-seekers and the abuse of national protection systems by human traffickers. Canada remained concerned about the situation of the refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as violence against minority religious groups in Iraq, which had forced many Iraqis, including Christians, to flee. It applauded UNHCR for its timely development of strategies to respond to sexual violence, including rape as a weapon of war, sexual slavery and forced prostitution, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization, and encouraged the key United Nations actors to develop better strategies to address the persecution of religious minorities with a view to preventing displacement.

51. Her delegation wished to underline the importance of the strategic use of resettlement to unlock other durable solutions or to improve the protection environment for those left behind. Canada had expanded its resettlement programmes in order to assist Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and Iraqis in the Middle East, and it encouraged other Member States to make similar efforts.

52. **Mr. Goltyaev** (Russian Federation) said that the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were an important element

of the international community's multifaceted efforts to promote peace and strengthen security and stability. The High Commissioner's report provided an account of the basic problems and trends in international protection. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol must continue to serve as the basis for international arrangements for the protection of refugees, and the mandate of UNHCR should remain unchanged. The activities of UNHCR must be strictly humanitarian and non-political, as required by its Statute.

53. The key role played by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in decision-making relating to the international protection of refugees must be preserved. His delegation supported the UNHCR standards for responding to situations of large-scale forced displacements.

54. The Russian Federation supported the efforts of UNHCR to pursue structural and budgetary reforms, which must be carried out in strict accordance with its existing mandate.

55. Improving national machinery for refugee protection and strengthening the role of UNHCR in assisting States to develop appropriate national systems were matters that needed to be addressed. Greater attention should be paid to coordination between UNHCR and the authorities in the States concerned, which must be based on clear agreement on the practical arrangements for activities to be undertaken.

56. His delegation shared the concern of UNHCR over the growing abuse of refugee status and believed that it was important to develop a unified international approach to status determination in order to prevent the concept from being debased.

57. His delegation noted the importance of work carried out by UNHCR to reduce statelessness and consistently supported increased attention to that issue. The decades-old unresolved problem of large-scale statelessness in Latvia and Estonia was totally unacceptable. UNHCR must play a greater role in finding a solution.

58. The Russian Federation supported UNHCR policies aimed at finding durable solutions to the problems of return, voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Carefully considered approaches were needed to address specific situations of large-scale resettlement in third countries in emergencies, with the involvement of the major regional partners.

59. The Russian Federation would continue to take part in a dialogue with UNHCR on the full range of issues relating to protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, with emphasis on enhancing cooperation on the broad issues of concern to the Russian Federation as a donor and equal partner.

60. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that the Libyan crisis had caused 900,000 people of more than 100 different nationalities to seek refuge in Tunisia, where they had been spontaneously assisted by the Tunisian people. The Government had monitored the border zone, organized mobile hospitals and set up camps, which continued to shelter many refugees from Africa and Southeast Asia. Tunisia had received international recognition for its hospitality, including during the commemoration of World Refugee Day. In addition to the many sister and friendly nations that had provided financial and logistical support, she wished to thank the humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies for their invaluable assistance.

61. In contrast, certain developed countries continued to balk at admitting refugees. Despite their limited resources, developing countries hosted the vast majority of the world's refugee population. It was necessary to make the principles of solidarity and equitable burden sharing a binding obligation by setting them out formally in international instruments.

62. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that his Government was strongly committed to providing adequate shelter, work and health services for returnees, even as security improved and their numbers grew. Of the 5.6 million Afghans that had returned since 2002, 4.6 million had received aid. However, owing to continuing insecurity, 40 per cent of repatriated Afghans had not set down roots, and some had even returned to their countries of refuge. In addition, the most insecure provinces had seen an increase in the number of internally displaced persons.

63. Afghanistan was grateful to its neighbours, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which had hosted most of its refugees for more than thirty years. The three countries were working with UNHCR to develop a multi-year joint strategy for Afghan refugees that would be presented at a stakeholders conference in early 2012.

64. **Mr. Nishiumi** (Japan) said that to enable refuges and internally displaced persons to return successfully to their places of origin, it was necessary to empower them to become self-reliant. Stressing that coordination among United Nations agencies was indispensable for efficient assistance, he congratulated UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration for their collaboration in Libya.

65. A regular UNHCR donor, Japan had contributed $226 million in 2011 — more than ever before. To ensure a seamless transition from humanitarian to development assistance, Japan was implementing more than 50 projects in 30 countries in partnership with UNHCR. In 2010, his country had launched a pilot refugee resettlement project, the first of its kind in Asia.

66. Japan applauded the High Commissioner's introduction of structural reforms and commended the active efforts to strengthen humanitarian coordination, such as support for the Humanitarian Coordinators Pool. In view of the growing funding gap, it urged UNHCR to redouble its efforts to broaden its donor base and to increase its cooperation with the private sector, which it could make more effective by sharing best practices for collaboration.

67. **Mr. Kasymov** (Kyrgyzstan) expressed appreciation for the level of fruitful cooperation that existed between his country and UNHCR. The protection of refugees was one of the main components of Kyrgyzstan's migration policy and was reflected in the enactment of legal provisions and in practical measures to solve existing problems.

68. Kyrgyzstan had acceded in 1996 to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. It had adopted a Refugees Act in 2002, which UNHCR deemed to be fully in accord with international standards. The Act contained provisions relating to assistance to refugees in the acquisition of Kyrgyz citizenship and access to education, employment, property ownership and legal assistance. In addition, guarantees were provided to ensure that refugees would not be returned to a country where they might suffer persecution.

69. With the aim of translating such legal provisions into reality, various programmes were being carried out in Kyrgyzstan, with the active participation of UNHCR, relating to voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in third countries. Kyrgyzstan was providing international protection for more than 20,000 refugees.

70. It was 60 years since the adoption of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and 50 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and yet there were some 44 million people in the world who had been forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution, accompanied by premeditated attacks on civilians and violations of basic human rights. The number of refugees returning voluntarily to their countries of origin was at the lowest level in more than two decades.

71. As indicated in the High Commissioner's report (A/66/12), some 75,000 persons who had fled across the border into Uzbekistan had returned home within the space of a few days and 300,000 internally displaced persons who had returned to their place of habitual residence at the end of 2010 were being assisted by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic through an agency set up specifically to promote recovery in the southern part of the country. As a party to international instruments on refugees and human rights, Kyrgyzstan was committed to discharging its international obligations in those areas.

72. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that his delegation was concerned about the impact that smaller contributions from traditional donors might have on the precarious humanitarian situations described in the UNHCR report. It welcomed the African Union's 2009 adoption of the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, which addressed a long-standing, serious problem.

73. In August 2011, under a $10 million emergency humanitarian aid programme for the countries in the Horn of Africa, Algeria had begun airlifting food, medicine and tents to Kenya for the Somali refugees in Dadaab and food to drought-stricken Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Uganda. To help the refugees pouring out of Libya, it had quickly set up border reception and clearing centres to provide shelter, food and medical care, clear up documentation problems and organize the refugees' return to their countries of origin.

74. In a tradition of hospitality, Algeria had hosted the Tindouf refugee camps for several decades, largely at its own expense. His delegation thanked UNHCR for facilitating the resumption of family visits between refugees in the Tindouf camps and their families in

Western Sahara and for its continued involvement in the nutrition, health and education of the refugees. Humanitarian assistance to the camps had been strengthened in 2010 by a World Food Programme (WFP) agreement to provide more than $31 million in food assistance and a management agreement for the food security stock that would be established. He expressed his country's appreciation to UNHCR and WFP for having organized a donor mission to the Tindouf camps in April 2011 and thanked the donors for their commitments. Lastly, he expressed appreciation for the periodic UNHCR/WFP joint assessment missions, which continued to confirm the transparency of Algeria's assistance delivery operations.

75. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) said that despite the ongoing international economic crisis, Egypt was confident that Member States would provide UNHCR with adequate resources to carry out its mandate and increase its attention to protracted refugee situations in developing countries. Pointing out that the international community had the necessary tools — including mediation, the theme of the sixty-sixth General Assembly — to mitigate the refugee phenomenon, he called on the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission to consolidate their efforts to that end. Member States had an obligation under international law to ensure that global efforts to protect and assist refugees were successful and should do so by sharing the burdens and responsibilities, accepting refugees for resettlement and propitiating voluntary repatriation. In that connection, he encouraged the General Assembly to support the Peacebuilding Commission, which facilitated voluntary return by helping the Governments of countries emerging from conflict to rebuild their institutional capacities and their ability to provide basic services. It was also necessary to reinvigorate the Convention Plus initiative, which aimed to encourage the development of multilateral special agreements on responsibility and burden sharing.

76. Egypt had spared neither effort nor expense to care for the refugees and displaced persons on its western border with Libya, but more must be done. He called on the international community to help provide for the refugees' needs and on the people and Government of Libya to establish an environment conducive to their return.

77. **Mr. Tang** (Estonia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, wished to address some gaps in the information presented by the representative of the Russian Federation with respect to Estonian citizenship policy. Since gaining independence in 1991, Estonia had been committed to naturalizing its large population of persons of undetermined citizenship. It had granted citizenship to more than 150,000 of them, and their numbers had decreased by a factor of 5. The Government continued to encourage all such persons to apply for citizenship. Moreover, even as non-citizens, they enjoyed more rights than foreseen under the 1954 convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons, since Estonia was one of the few countries in the world where legal residents had the right to vote in local elections, regardless of citizenship.

78. **Ms. Bouhamidi** (Morocco), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that when the representative of Algeria had evoked the need for international humanitarian assistance in the Tindouf camps, he had neglected to mention that his Government was blocking the census needed to obtain accurate statistics for that aid. In its resolution 1979 (2011), the Security Council clearly encouraged UNHCR "to maintain its consideration of a refugee registration in the Tindouf refugee camps", and the Secretary-General had urged appropriate attention to the issue of conducting a census of refugees in his 2010 and 2011 reports (S/2010/175 and S/2011/249). Algeria's continued refusal to allow a census, despite the good offices of UNHCR, was an affront to the international community.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.